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REPORT ON PROGRESS IN MAKING THE AFRICAN CENTRE OF METEOROLOGICAL APPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT (ACMAD) OPERATIONAL

M90-516

I. INTRODUCTION

1. It has always been the concern of member States that new institutions should only be created if there are no existing ones that can carry out the functions that are expected of the new one. The African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD) is one of those new institutions which was created because member States were convinced that no existing institution could perform the functions that were to be assigned to it.

2. This document outlines the progress made, and the constraints being faced, in making ACMAD operational.

II. THE BACKGROUND AND PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ACMAD

3. The decision by the Conference of Ministers in 1985, through its resolution 540 (XX), to set in motion activities that would result in the establishment of an institution of excellence in the application of meteorology was taken as a demonstration of the seriousness with which member States were determined to deal with the problem which drought was posing as a major factor in the economic crisis that had hit Africa.

4. When, in 1987, the Conference of Ministers, at its twenty-second session decided by resolution 621 (XXII) to establish the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, adopted its constitution and located the Centre in Niamey, Republic of Niger, it was expected that the Centre would become operational within the next twelve months. Consequently the first meeting of the Board of Governors, held in April 1988, worked out, inter alia, the scale of contributions to the recurrent budget of the Centre. This budget was adopted by the ECA Conference of Ministers through resolution 651 (XXIII) of April 1988 on the resources for ACMAD, at its twenty-third session.

5. By its resolution 651 (XXIII) on Resources for the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development (ACMAD), the ECA Conference of Ministers requested the Executive Secretary, in close collaboration with the Secretary-General of WMO, to continue carrying out all necessary activities to make the newly established Centre operational.

6. Since the inaugural meeting of the Board of Governors of ACMAD and the adoption of resolution 651 (XXIII), ECA and WMO have continued to work relentlessly in trying to mobilize the international community to support the Centre financially and technically as outlined below. However, the recommendations of the Board, resolution 651 (XXIII) and the time-table of activities approved by the policy organs could not be implemented as planned due to resource constraints and the difficulty in recruiting consultants to work on a comprehensive programme document, giving specific technical and financial details of the Centre. However, a final draft of the programme document for activities of the Centre was submitted to the second meeting of the Board of Governors in June 1989. The approved programme document was then used as the basis for negotiations with potential donors.

7. At the first technical level meeting between ECA, WMO and the potential donors in February 1988, the need for a statement regarding the economic benefits of ACMAD was expressed since such a document would ensure support for the Centre from member States and, particularly, from the funding agencies. Consequently, with the financial assistance of UNDP, a detailed programme document was prepared by ECA, WMO and FAO with the assistance of consultants.

8. The estimates for the resources needs of ACMAD during the initial phase, up to 1993, were estimated at SUS 20 million. Of this amount, the recurrent budget would be SUS 5 million which member States were to contribute as requested in resolution 651 (XXIII). For mobilizing the resources from member States for ACMAD, a letter was written to member States, requesting them to implement resolution 651 (XXIII) on the "Resources for ACMAD" and ratify the constitution as well as pay their contributions in order to operationalize the Centre including immediate recruitment of the Director-General and to demonstrate to potential donors the commitment of member States to the establishment of the Centre.

9. The second meeting of the Board, held in Addis Ababa from 26 to 28 June 1989, reviewed with great concern the problems being encountered in the slow rate at which ratification was taking place and the lack of contributions from member States. It was noted that, for it to become operational the Director-General and the core staff must be recruited. This could not be done since only Malawi had so far contributed. Furthermore, the interest of the donors could not be well sustained if member States did not demonstrate their commitment to the Centre by ratifying the constitution as well as paying their contributions. These problems were duly reported to the Conference of Ministers at its twenty-fourth session in April 1989 and, in consideration of which resolution 672 (XXIV) was adopted, urging member States to ratify the constitution and pay their contributions.

10. The situation of ratification of the Constitution of the Centre and payment of contributions is now as follows:

(a) Ratification: (Twelve countries): Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Mauritius, the Niger, Nigeria, Togo, Tunisia and Senegal:

(b) Contributions: (One country): Malawi.

11. As can be seen, the number of countries that have so far ratified the constitution does not reflect the high enthusiasm expressed by member States in 1985 for establishing ACMAD. Despite of this situation, ECA and WMO have continued to respond to the request of member States to mobilize support for the Centre from donor countries who, on their part, will always consider the level of commitment of the member States before pledging to provide support.

12. Pursuant to resolution 672 (XXIV), of April 1989, on Making Operational the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development as well as

resolution 651 (XXIII) of April 1988 on Resources for the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development, a meeting of potential donors to ACMAD, convened by ECA and WMO, was held in Geneva on 28 October 1989.

13. After considering the progress made in the establishment of the Centre and the financial resources that would be required to make it operational, the potential donors were firmly convinced of the need for the Centre and pledged their support. France offered to assist with some of the technical facilities and equipment, expertise and support for a number of operational activities details of which would be worked out later between ECA, WMO and the Centre. Belgium indicated that its Government would contribute equipment and expert services in the area of data collection, processing and storage, while the United Kingdom accepted to assist with training of technical staff for the Centre as well as in establishing telecommunications links to the weather centre at Bracknell in the United Kingdom. The representatives of other donors, notably China, Finland and Japan, indicated that they would provide support for various components of the Centre when the necessary bilateral contacts are made with their various governments.

14. United Nations agencies - UNDP, UNEP, FAO and UNSO - as well as the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank also confirmed their commitment to the Centre and modalities for their participation would be worked out later on with ECA and WMO.

15. It must be pointed out that the host country, Niger, has already provided temporary premises for the Centre to begin operations immediately and land for the construction of the permanent site. Housing and transport facilities have also been made available for the Director-General.

16. Furthermore, the job description for the Director-General of the Centre was finalized and the post advertised in October 1988, based on the conditions stipulated in the Staff Rules and Regulations of ACMAD, as approved at the inaugural meeting of the Board of Governors. Applications were received. It was hoped that the Director-General would be recruited so that the Centre could start operations by July 1990. Although applications were received, interviews could not be held because of lack of funds.

17. These are the activities that the secretariats of ECA and WMO have taken. Unfortunately, the reaction of member States, in not co-operating among themselves regarding the implementation of their commitments to the Centre, is reducing their credibility with the potential donors.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. Since 1985 when, by its resolution 540 (XX), the Conference of Ministers decided to establish ACMAD, member States have been kept informed by ECA and WMO of the progress in the establishment of the Centre as a result of which three resolutions have, since 1987, been adopted by the Conference of Ministers, namely 621 (XXII) of 1987, 651 (XXIII) of 1988 and 672 (XXIV) of 1989 all expressing the urgency for making the Centre operational. Despite all that, only twelve

countries out of fifty member States have ratified the constitution and worse still only one out of fifty has paid its contribution to the budget as requested by resolution 651 (XXIII).

19. In spite of the favourable reaction from the international community, the Centre cannot be launched without the recruitment of the core staff. The recruitment of the core staff depends entirely on the contributions from member States for the recurrent budget of the Centre.

20. As it now stands, the applications which have been received for the post of Director-General, interviews cannot be conducted because this will give the false impression that contributions have been made from which he will be paid. If this situation persists, ACMAD will only exist on paper and will never ever take off. It is worth noting that the current economic crisis in Africa puts many strains on the capacity of African countries to make their financial contributions to regional and subregional organizations. However, member States were fully aware of this situation and of the serious financial problems in which a majority of the regional and subregional institutions are, when they decided to establish ACMAD and when they adopted the scale of contributions to the recurrent budget of the Centre. The donor community is also fully aware of this and has in most cases, insisted on knowing how many member States have ratified the constitution as a sign of commitment and, most important, how many have paid their contributions.

21. Although the donors have made commitments, member States have not, as yet, demonstrated their commitment to the Centre through the ratification of its constitution and payment of their contribution to its recurrent budget. The interest manifested by donors so far can only be sustained if African member States participate actively in the operations of the Centre. Therefore member States must demonstrate their continued commitment to the Centre by ratifying the constitution and paying their contributions to its recurrent budget.

22. It would appear from the rate of ratification and payment of contributions that the majority of member States are reluctant to implement the decision establishing ACMAD. If the decision is to continue with the activities of making the Centre operational, a definite deadline must be set by this Conference for the contributions beginning from April 1982 when annual scales of contribution were adopted. Furthermore, if member States decide to continue, it would be strongly recommended that the membership of the Board of Governors be reviewed to include only those member States that have so far ratified the constitution of the Centre and/or paid their contributions.